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SIMONY

IN THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

A Letter

TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND THE

LORD BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH,

BY THE

REV. EDWARD STUART, M.A.,

VICAR OF

S. MARY MAGDALENE'S,

MUNSTER SQUARE.

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MY LORD,

You have begun at the wrong end. You have begun with repression instead of encouragement. Instead of pointing out to young clergymen, or to young men desirous of becoming clergymen, some honest, public source of preferment in the Church, you ask for an Act of Parliament enabling the Bishops to 'forbid' this, and 'forbid' that, and 'forbid' the other; but the 'fons et origo mali,' the want of any reasonable prospect of preferment from a public source, this you do not touch.

You will not get rid of Simony in this way: i.e., of what is technically called Simony; for Simony in the Scriptural sense of that word, it certainly is not. You may throw out as acute an angle as you please into the road, but you will find others quite as acute as

yourself. They will slip round your barrier, or leap over it, or dive under it, one way or another, if they are determined to do so. Don't waste time in trying to block up their road ; *open a better road to them*, and so draw them off in the opposite direction.

For what is it that a clergyman really wants, when (through his friends) he buys a living? He wants a permanent, and comparatively independent position, where he may safely give his time, and mind, and money to his parish, without the fear of being turned adrift at six months' notice. Would any man in his senses, would you, yourself, my Lord, give £100 or £1000 to your Church, or Schools, or Parish, when you might receive 'notice to quit' next day? Point out some open, honest, honourable source of preferment, and Simony will die out of itself.

And this can be done easily enough. Unite the patronage of the Bishop with that of the Dean and Chapter in each Diocese. They are both public, ecclesiastical bodies. And then, when any living *in their patronage* is vacant, let the parishioners, communicants of the Church of England, present to the Bishop and Chapter the names of three clergymen, one of whom at least must be a curate in the Diocese, and let the Bishop and Chapter, comprising, for this purpose, the Arch-

deacons and Rural Deans, elect by a majority of votes, one out of the three ; reserving to the Bishop his superior authority, by giving him an absolute 'veto' on one of them.

And then do two things more. First ; make the sale of next presentations, and of Advowsons, (excepting only the sale of Advowsons to the Bishop and Chapter of the Diocese) illegal, absolutely null and void in law. And, secondly ; let facilities be given by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to Bishops and Chapters for the purchase of Advowsons, reserving to the present patron the next one, or two, or three presentations. Such purchases would come cheap, and be effectual in the end : and patrons would be well pleased, I dare say, to have a lump sum paid down to them at once, over and above the two or three next presentations, in lieu of future patronage, to be exercised at a date to which no living being could reasonably look forward. Poor livings too would probably be made over to the Bishop and Chapter, or sold to them for the merest trifle ; as they would have a better chance of augmentation and of help from a public, Diocesan body, than from a private and perhaps a needy patron.

The Incumbent thus appointed would at once have a permanent position ; which, however, would not ex-

clude him from further preferment ;—and in point of money he would be more independent ;—for, instead of sinking his £5,000 in the purchase of a living, and being hampered by many ties of residence, duty, &c., before he can receive the interest of his own money, he would have his £200 or £300 or £400 a year and his house, in return for his work ; (“the labourer is worthy of his hire :”) and he would have his £5,000, interest and capital unfettered, in his pocket as well. Who would hesitate for a moment between the two ?

And then as to conscience and honour. Though the purchase of a living is Simony only in the technical legal sense, and not in the Scriptural sense of that word, still it does, no doubt, tempt a clergyman to cultivate an ‘electioneering’ conscience ; it exposes him to ill-natured, and often, I dare say, unfair remarks, from all which he would be free in the other case.

Don’t try to ‘repress’ and ‘forbid’ and ‘put down,’ when the thing can be so much better done the other way. The real cause of (so called) Simony is the want of any intelligible, trustworthy system of preferment in the Church. Remove the cause, by establishing such a system, and the disease will die out. Once set up

a public, trustworthy, dependable system of preferment in each Diocese, and patronage, large and small, will flow into it from all sides ;—

“ Plures adnabunt tunni et cetaria crescent.”

I remain, my Lord,

With all respect,

Your obedient servant,

EDWARD STUART.

P. S. One word more. Why shouldn't Bishops give up their seats in Parliament, and live at their Cathedrals?







